3:Wolf F-5 (1959-1961) 1968 AD5 Taiwan Hokkien
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chapter 1

THE CITY AND THE MARKET TOWN

Taiwan is a beautiful green island, 240 miles long and 88 miles wide. On the east coast the mountains rise straight from the sea to over 13,000 feet. Stretches of the one-lane highway connecting north and south are literally carved out of cliffs that hang above the Pacific. The mountains, a steep, tangled mass of rich tropical foliage and giant trees, appear uninhabitable and uninhabited, but the remnants of nine different aborigine groups somehow manage a living on their precipitous slopes. In the west the mountains descend less dramatically onto a fertile plain that extends to the sea. It is on the rich, alluvial soils of this plain that the majority of the twelve million Chinese inhabitants make their home. Nearly every tillable foot of land is sectioned and under cultivation. In the north, where the dry season is limited to a few weeks in the fall, the land is a patchwork of neatly squared and banked rice paddies. On a sunny day the intensity of the green in a paddy of young growing rice plants is almost painful; even on the dull, humid days of summer the green seems to rise in the steaming air, distorting colors into complements. Farther south, where the dry season is longer, the color is more subdued, both because wet paddy farming is less common and because the foliage is not washed by a daily rain.

The capital of Taiwan, Taipei, sits in a damp basin on the northern tip of the plain. People who have lived in Peiping and Nanking say it is an ugly city, lacking the beauty of cities on the Chinese mainland but retaining all their faults. Since much of its growth took place

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Since much of its growth took place
633 during the fifty-odd years of Japanese administration, Taipei is
341 weighted down with ugly though solid Japanese colonial architecture,
177 studious imitations of public buildings in the British colonies. Current shoddy attempts at sinification make them even less attractive. In some of the more expensive residential neighborhoods there are still beautiful examples of Japanese domestic architecture hidden behind
633 high brick walls. These residential streets, many of them unpaved and
363 all bordered by open sewer ditches, are peaceful, the quiet disturbed
[463] only by an occasional car, a squeaking pedi-cab, and the varied, melodic calls of passing peddlers, knife-sharpeners, and shoe-repairers. At night the soft clack-clack of the blind masseur's bamboo rattle is as natural as a bird's song.

The streets in the business section of the city are anything but peaceful. The great clattering, rattling buses seem to have no springs and no speed limits; automobiles, mainly in the form of taxis or military jeeps, use horns more frequently than brakes. Sidewalks and roadways alike are clogged with bicycles, pedi-cabs, and pedestrians who reverse direction, cut across traffic, or come to a complete halt without warning or apparent reason. Cartloads of bricks and logs drawn by sweating, straining men or ambling yellow oxen use the same lanes as buses hurtling forward at forty miles an hour.

633 Beyond the hustling downtown districts that sell the essential
361 luxuries to the wealthy are the Taiwanese sections of the city, areas of
369 commerce and residence, often combined, that seem both flimsy and timeless. There is architecture here too, but it would take a coldly disciplined observer to look above the busy life in the shops and the streets to evaluate the style of the buildings. Here is the real texture of a Chinese city. There is poverty, but not the thin, sour smell of
633 poverty in American cities. Tiny shops sell cheap, shoddy cotton
444 goods, coarse household basketry, and thin metal pots and pans. The
[354] owners' wives squat in front, fanning portable stoves of clay and coal
[262] dust, cooking the evening meal of vegetables and pork fat or, depending upon the day's business, only vegetables. Customers step over and
[954] around the children sleeping or playing amid the merchandise and on
[855] the sidewalks; they bargain with the shopkeeper's wife while the baby tied on her back sleeps peacefully through their rising and falling
633 voices. Few cars attempt the narrow lanes but pedi-cabs and bicycles
[363] thread in and around the pedestrians with a grace and speed that often ends in a squealing of brakes and shouted oaths. In the few arcades or
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